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From: Smith, Bonnie
Sent: Mon 8/10/2015 1:59:47 PM
Subject: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - Monday - August 10, 2015

EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines

Monday, August 10 , 2015

*** DAILY HOT LIST ***

WAMU-radio

Project Turning A Vacant Baltimore Lot Into A Greenspace

http://wamu.org/news/15/08/10/turning_a_vacant_baltimore_lot_into_a_greenspace

Regional EPA director calls wastewater spill in Animas River 'tragic' EPA director: 'It's hard being on other side of this'

DURANGO — Environmental Protection Agency officials facing sad, scared and angry residents whose river is being poisoned after botched federal work on an old mine apologized Friday, calling it a tragic disaster and revealing some of the contaminants in the water.

The soupy yellow-orange Animas River contains arsenic, lead, cadmium, aluminum and copper — among other potentially toxic heavy metals — "at varying levels," the officials said in a packed public meeting.

But exactly how much remained uncertain Friday night, frustrating local authorities scrambling to protect public health and line up sufficient alternative water sources.

An acidic, yellowish discharge still was leaking out of the Gold King Mine portal, about 60 miles north of Durango (population 17,000), at an estimated rate of about 1,200 gallons a minute, state and federal officials said. EPA crews at the mine were trying to create a large hole to catch the contaminant-laced wastewater and try to clean it before it reaches streams and rivers.

EPA regional chief Shaun McGrath told residents the spill may be worse than a one-time belch from the mine with long-term downriver impacts leading to possible closures next spring and after as river currents re-churn deposited heavy metal contaminants.

Colorado river fouled by 1 million gallons of contaminated gold mine water | [View Clip](#)
08/08/2015

Virginia Gazette - Online, The

...but the tests were still being analyzed, said Joan Card, an adviser to Environmental Protection Agency Regional Director

When our river turned orange

High Country News

Nine things you need to know about the Animas River mine waste spill.

Bay Foundation won't appeal lawsuit regarding stream exclusion | [View Clip](#)
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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation said last week it would not appeal dismissal of a lawsuit against Virginia that sought state requirements...

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation said last week it would not appeal dismissal of a lawsuit against Virginia that sought state requirements...

Searching for Phosphorus Management Options | [View Clip](#)
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Lancaster Farming – Online

...Along with nitrogen, it's on the nutrient hit list for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes. Phosphorus has "become a..."

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Lancaster Farming – Online

With so much focus on Lancaster County farms polluting the Chesapeake Bay, it's easy to forget that fields and pastures are important...

Renewable energy cannot supply total needs for electricity | [View Clip](#)
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Morning Call Online

Natural gas pipeline and fracking opponents proclaim that renewable resources like

solar power are benign with no negative impact on the...

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Reading Eagle Online

...minute, according to the Energy Policy Act of 1992, which is noted on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency...

August is prime-time season for butterfly beauty in your yard | [View Clip](#)

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Daily Press Online

...Agricultural and Research Center, 1444 Diamond Springs Road (leads to Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel; take Northampton Boulevard Exit...

Obama Administration Announces Clean Power Plan | [View Clip](#)

08/10/2015

Washington Afro American Online

...The president is mandating even steeper greenhouse gas cuts from U.S. power plants than previously expected, while granting states...

Curbing global warming: Mission impossible? | [View Clip](#)

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Washington Post Online

...it. President Obama's plan to cut greenhouse-gas emissions from electric power plants, accounting for roughly one-third of U.S...

EPA: Estimated leak of mine waste into Colo. river tripled to 3 million gallons | [View Clip](#)

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...Press reported . The EPA is looking into getting the area designated as a SuperFund cleanup site, according to the Daily Times

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Route Fifty

...as ski areas to timber harvesting to cattle grazing, mining and oil and gas drilling. Some state lawmakers and a growing number of...

Mission impossible?

08/09/2015

Washington Post, The

On climate change, we need to go beyond the tired story line of "deniers" vs. the "scientific consensus." Until it's discredited by falling temperatures, global warming is a reality. We can still debate how much has occurred and the share attributable to human activity, but the more relevant question is what - if anything - can be done about it. President Obama's plan to cut greenhouse-gas emissions from electric power plants, accounting for roughly one-third of U.S. greenhouse emissions, shows the practical limits in a democratic society.

Let's assume, for simplicity's sake, that the plan works perfectly. It achieves its goal of reducing carbon emissions from power plants in 2030 by 32 percent from a base year of 2005. Other problems fade. Court challenges to the regulations are rejected. The expansion of solar and wind generation does not lead to less reliable electricity supplies. Greater efficiencies and cheap natural gas avoid sizable consumer rate increases.

Even under these favorable assumptions, Obama's plan won't immediately depress global temperatures, which - if the logic of climate change holds - will be higher in 2030 than today.

A refresher course in global warming explains why. What counts are the amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. It's these concentrations that are said to trap heat and raise temperatures. The concentrations have gone from roughly 280 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide in preindustrial times, around 1800, to about 315 ppm in 1960 to 400 ppm now. As long as concentrations increase, so does the potential for more warming.

Obama's plan doesn't reduce these concentrations. It just cuts - but does not eliminate - the annual emissions into the atmosphere. These emissions raise concentration levels, which are now growing by about 2 ppm per year, says Princeton climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer. True, Obama's plan might slow this a tad. However, the larger point is that ongoing power plant emissions, though diminished, would continue to boost concentration levels.

Here's the dilemma. Eliminating fossil fuel emissions from coal, oil and natural gas

would presumably stabilize most human impact on global warming. But if done now, it would also destroy modern economies because fossil fuels provide four-fifths of the world's primary energy. There's no quick way of finding substitutes for all the fossil fuels. A single-minded focus on global warming would plunge the world into depression.

Politicians straddle the dilemma by talking tough on global warming while giving priority to the economy. Obama's approach seems in this spirit. His rhetoric last week was stark. "No challenge poses a greater threat to our future and future generations than a changing climate," he said. Compared with this threat, his plan is modest. Indeed, it builds on existing trends. Electric utilities have already cut carbon emissions by about 15 percent since 2005 by switching from coal to cheap natural gas, which has about half of coal's emissions.

We need more candor on global warming. Obama's plan is a big deal for electric utilities and, if it goes awry, potentially for millions of households. The plan is complicated. States receive emissions goals and can meet the goals through various policies (energy efficiencies, a cap-and-trade program, a carbon tax, more natural gas generation, preferences for wind and solar). Love it or hate it, the plan still contributes to higher carbon dioxide concentrations. It may be worth doing; we may learn valuable lessons. But it's no panacea.

Similar considerations apply globally. In 2010, major countries adopted a goal of limiting the worldwide temperature increase to below 2 degrees Celsius (or slightly below 4 degrees Fahrenheit) from the preindustrial period. The International Energy Agency in Paris recently estimated that meeting this goal would, in effect, require all fossil fuel emissions to be eliminated by 2040. Needless to say, this isn't going to happen. As the agency has noted, countries' policies "fall short of the action necessary to meet the 2 [degrees] C climate goal."

There is a "mission impossible" quality to curbing global warming, though few say so openly. The dependence of economic growth on fossil fuels seems too strong to overcome. There are two hopes for doing so. One is that the warming predicted by some computer models is overstated; there is much uncertainty.

The second hope is that technological breakthroughs liberate economic growth from fossil fuels. It's easy to list desirable advances: better batteries and electricity storage (this would favor more wind and solar power); safer and cheaper nuclear power; and cost-effective "carbon capture" (this would store power plants' emissions underground).

The Internet shows that rapid technological revolutions are possible. On the other hand, these energy technologies have been explored for decades - and they still aren't available.

Samuelson: Curbing global warming: Mission impossible? | [View Clip](#)

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Washington Post Online

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RICK BERMAN: EPA's Clean Power Plan latest environmentalist claim of civilization doom

08/09/2015

Washington Times

With the EPA's long-expected rollout of its so-called Clean Power Plan (CPP) on Monday, we saw the much-expected justification of the regulations on grounds that the sky might fall if the government doesn't act. President Obama called the CPP a necessary step to fight climate change, warning, "We cannot condemn our kids and grandkids to a planet that's beyond fixing."

Does this scaremongering sound familiar? We've been hearing claims of doom for nearly 50 years from environmentalists. And they've been consistently wrong.

In 1970, Harvard biologist George Wald predicted, "Civilization will end within 15 or 30 years unless immediate action is taken against problems facing mankind."

The same year, LIFE magazine asserted, "In a decade, urban dwellers will have to wear gas masks to survive air pollution."

Jimmy Carter claimed during his presidency, "The oil and natural gas that we rely on for 75 percent of our energy are simply running out."

Bill McKibben, who runs the 350.org campaign, warned in 1989, "a few more decades of ungoverned fossil-fuel use and we burn up, to put it bluntly."

And yet Mr. Obama and environmentalists expect everyone to believe them now.

Since 1970, the environment has improved remarkably - all while we've grown the economy, increased job opportunities and increased our reliance on fossil fuels.

Ironically, the EPA puts it best on their website: "From 1970 to 2012, aggregate national emissions of the six common pollutants alone dropped an average of 72 percent while gross domestic product grew by 219 percent." The carbon intensity of the economy is about one-third what it was in the 1940s and CO₂ levels are at their lowest in 20 years.

As the data shows, we can grow the economy and become more prosperous by using fossil fuels while reducing pollution. Yet the Obama EPA can't get out of the way of its own findings.

Why? No doubt that's because of the undue influence and collusion between the Obama EPA and groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), which has a religious fervor for shutting down all use of coal and natural gas. The New York Times reported last year that three staffers with NRDC got together in 2010 to build carbon emissions policy for the EPA, producing a 110-page document by 2012 that they pitched to the EPA and Obama administration. Former NRDC employees at the EPA and Hill offices are known as the "NRDC Mafia."

Even if one accepts the premise of the Sierra Club, NRDC, and other radical environmentalists that the sky is about to fall, the Clean Power Plan won't accomplish much in the way of averting doomsday. The EPA itself calculates that the CPP will only reduce global temperatures by 0.02 degrees Celsius over the next 85 years. Meanwhile, the CPP is expected to cost tens of billions of dollars annually. This translates to American households paying 20% more on their electricity bills. This is the kind of cost-benefit tradeoff that only makes sense to radical environmentalists.

Even the hyped health benefits don't hold water. In his speech announcing the rule, Mr. Obama praised its triggering a reduction in childhood asthma. But while air pollution has declined significantly, asthma rates have skyrocketed, making it difficult to argue this rule will have any of its promised benefit.

This is one more regulation by Mr. Obama's EPA that will burden American families without much in the way of environmental or health upside. However, the administration's position isn't surprising given the collusion between the EPA and NRDC. These are the people who kneel every day at the altar of the sun and wind which provide the inefficient and expensive sources of energy.

Radical environmentalists rival weather forecasters for how often they can be wrong and still be employed. But the weather forecasts have percentage chances in the predictions. And, if they're wrong, the consequences might be that it rains when you are short an umbrella. Or it's a better day than you expected. When the greens with their absolute predictions are wrong, the consequences are bad policies that bankrupt businesses, ruin the jobs of employees and drive up costs for American households.

Rick Berman is president of Berman and Co., a Washington public affairs firm.

STEPHEN MOORE: War on coal destroys conservative states' towns

08/09/2015

Washington Times

Here's today's political quiz question: what do these five states - Rhode Island, Vermont, California, Oregon and Maine - have in common. Yes they are blue states ruled by Democrats, but that's not all. These are the states that use the least amount of coal - less than 2 percent - for electric power.

In fact, almost all of the states that are politically liberal and vote unfailingly Democratic are low coal use states. Washington, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut are also in the top 10 states least reliant on coal. Only conservative Idaho is a red state with low coal consumption.

Meanwhile, the heavy coal using states bleed red. West Virginia, Kentucky and Wyoming are all states that get about 90 percent of their electric power from coal. Missouri, Utah, Indiana and North Dakota also get 75 percent of their electricity from coal. See table.

Mr. Obama announced last week the toughest environmental regulations ever against coal. This is part of the president's war on coal that he announced when he was running for president in 2008. He has long admitted these policies to reduce emissions from coal burning electric power plants by one-third below 2005 levels by 2030 will "bankrupt" the coal industry. It's working. Coal towns are being vaporized across America and coal companies are going out of business.

But the pain from the new EPA rules won't be evenly distributed across America. Far from it. The coal producing states like West Virginia and Wyoming will see massive job losses and increases in electric utility costs. The nationwide costs will be about \$100 billion a year eventually or a reduction in GDP by about one-half percentage point, the Heritage Foundation finds. But for heavily impacted states - Republican areas in the Midwest, South and mountain states - the costs will reach about \$1,200 a year to average families. Mr. Obama's policies that have had such a crushing effect on middle-income family finances are about to get a whole lot worse.

The liberal coastal states will feel only modest effects because they don't use much coal.

Would Barbara Boxer of California and Sheldon Whitehouse from Rhode Island, two of the biggest cheerleaders for the new regulations, be so euphoric if their voters were paying these massive costs for their green agenda? But the east and west coast green snobs can live with raising costs and unemployment in "fly over country."

It's time to label the Obama green policies what they truly are: steep taxes on red state

America. By the way, many purple states like Pennsylvania, Ohio and Virginia also get hammered by Mr. Obama's climate change agenda.

The de facto tax that Mr. Obama wants to impose on American coal is doubly dastardly because it's impact will be felt hardest in relatively poorer states. And because Census Bureau data confirms that poor households spend 4 times more of their income on energy than rich families, the Obama policy will make income inequality much worse. But of course the upper crust Manhattan liberals who fund the Sierra Club and Mr. Obama and profess to care so much about the poor, can live with that. So much for "environmental justice."

Maybe all of this pain would be worth it if somehow these policies were going to reduce global carbon emissions and stop global warming as Mr. Obama assures us the will. They won't. New data from the Energy Information Administration and other sources tells the opposite tale. China and India are adding coal plants on a massive scale. World wide at least 1,000 new coal plants are planned.

I did the rough calculations. For every reduction in BTUs burned from coal in the United States, China and India alone will burn 10 to 12 more BTUs. Even if the United States cut coal use to zero over the next 20 years, global emissions from coal will rise sharply. So the Obama plan is all pain no gain. It would be like trying to reduce unwanted pregnancies in the Third World by having Americans use more birth control. Stupid.

But back to the Obama assault on red and purple states. Let's hope the voters get the message that Mr. Obama's green energy policies are directed at their jobs and their paychecks. Most people in blue states and the workers around the rest of the world won't feel a thing. This is fair?

Stephen Moore is a Fox News commentator and an economics contributor with Freedom Works.

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LETTERS - Aug. 2

08/09/2015

Philadelphia Inquirer

ISSUE | SHALE TAX

Levy means job loss

It is dangerously misleading to ignore the fact that even higher energy taxes jeopardize jobs ("How Pa. can get severance tax right," Aug. 2). Responsible shale development is driving a petrochemical rebirth, specifically at Marcus Hook. Sunoco Logistics' Mariner East 2 pipeline is expected to support an estimated 30,000 construction jobs, generate nearly \$62 million in tax revenues, and provide \$4.2 billion in economic activity.

In addition to the more than \$2.3 billion in taxes paid by the natural gas industry since 2008, Pennsylvania imposes a shale-gas impact tax that's generated more than \$850 million since 2011 for communities throughout the commonwealth.

We need tax policies that encourage responsible shale development and expanded natural gas uses, not policies that squander opportunity.

|Erica Clayton Wright, Marcellus Shale Coalition, Pittsburgh

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08/09/2015

Philadelphia Inquirer Online

...she needed to forgive herself and others. Blaming anybody, she said, is "a pollution."
sburling@phillynews.com 215-854-4944 @StaceyABurling

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...debris, bags of cement, medications, ammunition, explosives, electronics, asbestos, tires and cold patch. The county said each person...

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York Dispatch Online, The

...The campaign to stop President Barack Obama's sweeping emissions limits on power plants began taking shape Wednesday, as 16 states...

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...he said. State reaction The federal proposal to combat climate change drew mixed reactions from Pennsylvania officials,....

CLEAN POWER
08/08/2015
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Before the ink had dried on the Obama administration's new plan to limit power plant emissions, business interests and their political allies began gearing up to fight the rules in court. But compared with the scale of human-created climate change, the plan is modest and anti-regulation politicians offer no credible alternatives.

The Clean Power Plan unveiled last week marks the first national effort to slash climate-warming carbon emissions from power plants. The Environmental Protection Agency says it will reduce carbon emissions 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

State regulators will be allowed to create their own plans to achieve that goal, choosing from options such as increasing renewable energy production and trading emissions credits with other states, a market-based system that has drawn bipartisan support.

Phasing out coal, the dirtiest form of power generation, will figure into many states' plans. That has riled the coal industry and other trade groups that know the heavy reliance on the dirty fuel is inconsistent with any solution to climate change.

Gov. Tom Wolf said he will work with the Legislature, industry and citizens to fashion a specific plan for Pennsylvania, which has achieved a 12 percent drop in carbon emissions since 2008. Proximity to and greater use of Marcellus Shale natural gas will no doubt be part of the package.

The United States accounts for 16 percent of carbon emissions globally and has the highest rate of carbon consumption per person of any large nation. It's incumbent on America and other big polluters to lead global efforts to end reliance on fossil fuels.

Together with Mr. Obama's vehicle-emissions standards, the Clean Power Plan is the most serious step any administration has taken to combat climate change. Fossil-fuel lobbies complain that regulation harms their business, but they fail to show how to address the life-threatening effects of climate change without it. What is their alternative?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GIFFORD PINCHOT

08/08/2015

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Gifford Pinchot, who served two terms as Pennsylvania's governor and led the U.S. Forest Service as its first chief, and whose 150th birthday we celebrate Tuesday, had a face contemporaries loved. Most of all, they adored his moustache.

Cartoonists exaggerated its shape and size during Mr. Pinchot's controversial tenure at the Forest Service. It caught the fancy of Pennsylvania newspapers while he occupied the governor's mansion in the 1920s and 1930s. He loved being the center of attention and knew full well, right up to his death in 1946, that his moustache helped keep him in the spotlight.

Despite Mr. Pinchot's widely recognizable face-and political influence-his is no longer a household name. To the extent that Pennsylvanians remember Mr. Pinchot, many likely curse him. A staunch teetotaler, in 1933 he signed the legislation creating the state's Liquor Control Board.

And yet, on the sesquicentennial of Mr. Pinchot's birth, it is worth looking past his lamentable lack of appreciation for fine whiskey. In the Progressive Era, Mr. Pinchot, along with close friend Theodore Roosevelt, argued that the federal government was essential to the efficient and effective management of society's affairs. Like his presidential pal, he also believed deeply that only the nation state could guarantee a more just and equitable society.

Gifford Pinchot put his vision into action in 1905 in the national forests, asserting that they must be managed for "the greatest good, for the greatest number, in the long run." Sustainable management of what is now a 193-million-acre system was essential, he believed, so that each succeeding generation would receive an undiminished economic and social value from these vital public lands. Only the federal government could balance the cross-generational claims on the Allegheny National Forest and its many peers nationwide.

Seeking the "greatest good" was no cure-all, however. In fact, what constitutes the greatest good has been debated ever since. That prospect actually cheered Mr. Pinchot, for it meant democracy was alive. But it would flourish only so long as these disagreements occurred in an open, public arena and were not manipulated (or ignored) by corporate interests. "The rights of people to govern themselves," Mr. Pinchot wrote in his book, "The Fight for Conservation" (1910), should not be infringed on by "great monopolies through their power over natural resources."

Mr. Pinchot happily fought against entrenched monopolies while serving as Pennsylvania's governor (1923-1927 and 1931-1935). That's why the state's power elite Republicans and Democrats - despised him.

To secure office, he had to subvert the prevailing party system by building a successful

coalition of the dismissed, the disaffected and the marginalized. His fervent supporters included women, miners, farmers and (yes) prohibitionists. With their backing, he challenged the swelling clout of the utility industry, battled against Big Coal and Big Iron, and dispatched the state police to protect striking workers from company-financed goon squads. For good measure his wife, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot, stood on picket lines.

Putting the unemployed to work constructing 20,000 miles of "Pinchot Roads" that pulled farmers out of the mud, the energetic chief executive sent others to regenerate clearcut forests across the state. A healthy landscape and a salubrious body politic were the cornerstones of what Mr. Pinchot called "human conservation."

His principled approach is little evident in today's debates in Pennsylvania over fracking. Given his lifelong distrust of natural-resource companies, with their impact on the environment and political machinations in Washington, D.C., and Harrisburg, he probably would have prohibited fracking in the Keystone State, much as New York State has done.

In his first gubernatorial term, and many decades before federal clean-water legislation, Mr. Pinchot advocated for and signed legislation to stop industry from dumping pollutants in Pennsylvania rivers. He could not have missed the parallels to fracking wastewater infiltrating streams and groundwater and would not have been silent about the serious threat this effluent posed to public and environmental health - that is, to the "greatest good."

Even if Mr. Pinchot decided that fracking - like logging and mining back in his day - was essential to the state's economy and its citizens' economic well-being, he would have put strict limits on its operations. Protecting the people, the communities they inhabited and the water resources they and future generations rely on would have been his first order of business.

And he would have fought hard for his convictions. Mr. Pinchot loved the thrust-and-parry of Pennsylvania politics. He relished mixing it up with opponents, knowing this was the only way to change the state's political culture and expand the opportunities available to its least powerful citizens.

This, then, is a man well worth celebrating - along with his signature moustache.

Char Miller is W.K. Keck Professor of Environmental Analysis at Pomona College and author of "Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism." Kevin C. Brown earned his doctorate at Carnegie Mellon University and is a postdoctoral researcher for the American Society for Environmental History. He lives in Friendship.

LEAD EXPOSURE REMAINS RISK FOR ALLEGHENY COUNTY CHILDREN

08/08/2015

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

There is still lead in Prashant Poudel, but not as much as there once was. The toddler was poisoned by his apartment.

Prashant's parents are Bhutanese refugees, but Prashant was born here, into a home in Carrick ignored by a delinquent landlord.

"We took him for a regular checkup; they said that there is a chemical called lead in the blood," said Prashant's father, Padam Poudel, 40. "They said it is not good; it affects the growth."

Prashant was about 6 months old, and the lead in his body, at 15 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood, was three times what the Centers for Disease Control considers an "elevated blood lead level." But it was too low to trigger an automatic inspection from the Allegheny County Health Department, and too low still to constitute on its own a housing violation on the part of the owner. The Poudels stayed in their home for four more months.

Despite downward trends in the levels of lead in children and the efforts of local health departments and housing agencies, many children in Allegheny County remain at risk for serious health problems that result from lead exposure but are not receiving the attention they require. Because lead tests are not yet mandatory, public awareness is lacking. Information roadblocks prevent greater understanding of the full extent of the health risk in the area.

Lead paint was banned for residential use in 1978 by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and from gasoline in 1990 by the Clean Air Act, but that doesn't mean all lead is gone. Many houses built before 1978, and especially those built before or during the 1950s, still have it on walls, windowsills, ceilings and railings - but underneath the topmost layer of new paint.

Pittsburgh is especially at risk for such hazards. Out of Allegheny County's 587,831 housing units (according to a 2013 census estimate), 45.5 percent were built before 1950, far higher than the national average of 19 percent.

Since the federal CDC began its lead poisoning prevention branch some 25 years ago, targeted efforts have made headway in reducing both the number of children at risk for lead poisoning and the severity of that poisoning.

According to Pennsylvania Department of Health data, the average amount of lead recorded in children has dropped by more than a third in 10 years. In Allegheny County, 158 children were measured as having "high" levels of lead in 2013, down from 227 just five years prior.

However, that doesn't quite capture the number of kids who are being harmed by lead.

The health department's benchmark for "high" is still twice the recommended CDC guidelines, which were updated in 2012 in consultation with health experts.

"Any level of blood causes impairment, to some extent," said Eric Hornbuckle, spokesman for the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "It's a matter of how much poisoning you're willing to tolerate in a child."

Any blood-lead measurement above 5 micrograms per deciliter is considered "elevated" by the CDC. But local health organizations have not yet updated their policies to reflect that change.

Falling through the cracks

Although the Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at the Allegheny County Health Department will provide consultation and advice on the topic to anyone, it takes a measurement above 20 micrograms per deciliter in a child (or two consecutive measurements of 15 micrograms per deciliter) to be considered an "environmental intervention blood lead level." That means the Health Department is required to investigate any possible sources of poisoning.

Prashant hit 15 micrograms per deciliter, but Healthy Homes could come to the apartment only when Mr. Poudel reached out to the county Health Department, which determined the family was income-qualified for a general hazard inspection. In their case, the problems at 2500 Berg Place went far beyond peeling paint.

"There was leakage from the restroom, broken wall and the sewers back up," Mr. Poudel said. "They inspected the wall and found the lead everywhere. In this building, the situation is very not suitable for human habitat."

In 2013, Healthy Homes conducted 47 lead-based paint risk assessments, 17 of which were in counties outside of Allegheny, which the program also covers. In 2014, it conducted 27, three of which were outside the county.

According to the state Department of Health, however, 1,121 children in Allegheny County registered blood lead levels higher than 5 micrograms per deciliter in 2013. CDC data that year showed 12,122 kids statewide measured with blood-lead levels between 5 and 14 micrograms per deciliter: too high for the CDC, but too low for Healthy Homes.

"You can't get a knee-jerk response from the Health Department until you're at 15 [micrograms per deciliter], but we know that there are still health and behavioral concerns under 15," said Amy Nevin, a physician at the Hilltop Community Health Center on Mount Washington.

Why such a large gap in coverage?

"It probably has to do with resources available," said Dave Namey of the Healthy Homes program.

Flying blind

In 2012, CDC funding for lead screening and a nationwide lead surveillance system stopped, due to budget cuts at the federal level. It was replaced with Healthy Homes, which still does home risk assessments for lead but no longer screens kids, instead emphasizing primary prevention and covering a variety of housing hazards.

Lead screening in Pennsylvania is not universal, and most schools do not require lead tests as part of their mandatory checkups. They are, however, covered by most if not all private insurers, and required by both Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, which Prashant has.

Across Allegheny County, 15.57 percent of children ages 7 and under were tested in 2013, while Pittsburgh, which is tracked separately, had a 38.77 percent testing rate. (Those rates, if available, would be higher for just children under 3, as that's the period when most tests are given.) The number of kids being tested has, in fact, gone up in recent years, but it's far lower than what advocates want.

"If you don't look at it, you don't know it's there - both in the blood and in the home," said Dr. Nevin.

Healthy Homes depends on pediatricians for their alerts, but they've have been hesitant to cooperate. Without a national surveillance system, health departments, including the state Department of Health, will cite Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act privacy rules as the reason to withhold identifying information such as names or addresses.

"While it doesn't cripple us, it does turn one of the headlights off," Mr. Hornbuckle said.

Multiple requests from the Post-Gazette for the addresses of local homes investigated for lead paint were not answered by the state or county health departments.

HUD and CDC released a joint letter on July 7 stating that health departments may share address information to housing departments, hoping their endorsement will help ensure the proper implementation of these programs.

A month ago, the Poudel family moved into their new apartment on Brownsville Road. This one is clean; the paint on the walls is intact.

Prashant's blood-lead level has dropped in half, to 7 micrograms per deciliter, and continues to go down. He's 2 years old now, and getting regular checkups to make sure

his development is normal; soon, if all goes right, he will start preschool.

"They say everything is OK," Mr. Poudel said. "I think he is doing well."

Gabe Rosenberg: grosenberg@post-gazette.com, 412-592-8365, and on Twitter @gabrieljr.



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Layered works explore erosion of world's resources

08/07/2015

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Fracking in our region is a contentious issue. But it's also a concern worldwide.

Although global shale exploitation hasn't yet approached the scale seen in the United States, the process is under way. Next up are countries like Russia, China, Argentina and Libya, where more than half of the world's shale oil resources are located.

Fracking has long been touted by the oil and gas industries as a seemingly endless source of energy. But on this planet, can anything be an endless source?

That's one of the messages behind "Small Global," a three-part, immersive, film installation by D-Fuse.

"This type of thing raises the question of what is the balance?" says Murray Horne, curator of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Wood Street Galleries. "It's a finite planet, so where do we stand? Based on rapid consumption "□ we can't support everything."

"Small Global" is part of the exhibit "Pattern & Noise," which features the work of D-Fuse, a London-based artist collective (Mike Faulkner, Matthias Kispert, Paul Mumford and Toby Harris) whose works cross a range of media.

Founded in the mid-1990s by Faulkner, D-Fuse's output encompasses installations, film, experimental documentary, photography, live cinema performances and architectural projects.

Beginning in graphic and web design and VJing, D-Fuse's work has evolved into performance-based works that address social and environmental themes and explore collaborative processes.

That was certainly the case July 10 during the Trust's Gallery Crawl, when the group performed "Tekton," a live re-imagining of D-Fuse's exhibition at Wood Street Galleries, and "Latitude [31°10N /121°28E]," a sonic cinema journey through Chinese urban landscapes, at the Peirce Studio at the Trust Arts Education Center on Liberty Avenue.

That live audio-visual performance was presented onto two layers of screens: a transparent gauze that hangs in front of the performers with a solid projection screen at the back, allowing images to float and diffuse, creating a sense of expanded space.

In much the same way in the gallery, "Small Global" is presented as an interactive video installation with surround sound that translates data about global interdependence, consumption and its environmental costs into an immersive environment.

Multiple layers of transparent screens create a cube of projected images. Visitors can walk around and inside the cube, their bodies becoming part of the projection surfaces. Interaction sensors allow visitors to reveal visual information with their presence.

"Small Global" signifies a global interdependence that often goes unnoticed in an environment saturated with marketing messages, which are designed to make us forget that the production of the goods we consume can have devastating consequences in parts of the world we might not even be aware of.

The piece was originally commissioned in 2005 by Eyebeam (NYC) with two modules dealing with deforestation and mobile-phone production. The group worked with academics from the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in 2013 to create the third module about Extreme Energy extraction methods such as tar sands mining and shale gas fracking. It premiered at the Bloomsbury Festival in London.

D-Fuse is currently working on the fourth module, Atmosphere, which is exploring changing weather patterns that are having an increasingly severe impact on populations across the globe. They will be working with scientists from the UCL-Lancet Commission on the Health Impact of Climate Change.

"Small Global" has been shown internationally and in a range of settings, from exhibits in shopping malls in China, in galleries in Argentina, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Germany, to the Greenpeace Field at the Glastonbury Festival.

On the second-floor galleries, visitors are privy to two more installations by the group "Tekton Two Zero" and "Tekton One Three."

The ongoing collaboration between D-Fuse and Labmeta (Mike Faulkner and Paul Mumford) is from a series of works exploring the qualities of light and motion, produced by mechanical or machine-like assemblages.

"Tekton Two Zero' is a structure that rotates," Horne says. "It has these formal elements that reflect light. So, this is like a digital version, or digital rendering, of a light space modulator, in the sense that it functions in the digital world, but it's modulating light. It's completely artificial, but even though it's digital, it has this reference to the analog world, thanks in part to the accompanying soundtrack, which has mechanical sounds."

In the process of creating the work, the artists built multilayered, light-emitting objects into machine-like forms; moving wholes, which are then manipulated to produce emergent patterns of stability and disorder in a recursive intermingling between human and machine.

Inspired by the constructivist designs of Vladimir Tatlin and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's light space modulator, physical or mechanical rules are used as creative constraints in a moving architecture of light.

"Tekton One Three" is more analog in nature. Functioning as a machine that prints light in space, it is composed of two strips of LEDs put in vertical motion by a motor that runs each from floor to ceiling on a conveyor belt.

The LEDs are programmed to emit sequences of light in horizontal patterns. In the relationship between these two directions of movement, between light transversing space and afterimage imprinted on the retina, various complex patterns emerge right in front of the eyes of the viewer.

Dots, lines and curves overlap to create traces of movement, light and dark, pattern and disorder, harmony and dissonance.

"It produces various permutations of color, light and speed," Horne says. "Sometimes they are synchronized together, and sometimes they are spread apart."

"It's like it's got a life of its own."

Kurt Shaw is the art critic for Trib Total Media.

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Pilot program aims to extend natural gas service to homes

08/07/2015

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Pennsylvania's top utility regulator wants to see more natural gas companies extend service to neighborhoods that are missing out on cheap Marcellus shale gas.

"When I've gone to a lot of the drilling sites, you're passing all these houses and these people don't have access to the natural gas they're sitting on," Public Utility Commission Chair Gladys Brown told the Tribune-Review on Friday during a visit to Penn Hills.

The commission has started a pilot program with three utilities to extend gas service to homes. Separately, it is encouraging electric utilities to use a new surcharge available to pay for power line improvements.

Brown, who joined the five-member commission in 2013 and was named chair in May by Gov. Tom Wolf, is pushing for such infrastructure upgrades across several sectors regulated by her agency as she seeks to update the PUC's operations.

Regulations covering Pennsylvania One Call, broadband Internet and taxi service are candidates for rewrites, Brown said.

"We need to look at our transportation legislation in general. The language is old," she said. "We're an administrative agency. We're statutorily created. Some of these statutes need to be changed to bring them up to the modern needs of today."

Brown, 52, of Harrisburg is familiar with those statutes because she helped write many of them while working "across the street" in the capitol as a lawyer for Senate Democrats for 23 years.

"Her area of expertise was those utility matters," said Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa, D-Forest Hills. "Her breadth of experience in these matters is huge."

A University of Pittsburgh graduate, Brown said her utility law knowledge was limited when she started working for the government. A series of moves to deregulate several utility industries followed and gave her a crash course in the sector and consumer protection.

"Utility law is very technical, but it's very important to know," she said.

Which brought her to the Penn Hills Library, where a room packed full of several dozen seniors peppered Brown and a commission staffer with questions about their electric bills.

The commission is encouraging people to shop for electric suppliers through its updated PaPowerSwitch.com website. Many in the crowd struggled to understand how the retail market for electricity works and expressed concerns about picking plans in which their rate may change from month to month.

Extreme price spikes during the winter of 2014 scared some people away from the market. The commission is still investigating price and marketing complaints raised during the so-called polar vortex.

"Education still needs to be done ... because competition can save you money. But the consumer has to be educated as well," Brown said. "That's a priority of mine, consumer education."

Even outside of work, Brown is active in education endeavors, through her church and the graduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

"I'm kind of a workaholic," she said.

Her term on the commission runs through 2018. If it wasn't renewed, Brown noted she still has her law license.

"The options are wide open, because I did a lot more things than utility law across the street," she said.

David Conti is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 412-388-5802 or dconti@tribweb.com

ONE VIEW
08/07/2015
Waynesboro Record Herald

Energy policy dinosaurs are trying to trample new Environmental Protection Agency rules designed to cut carbon pollution from its most prolific source: coal-fired electricity plants.

Republicans in Congress and 10 governors are fighting the Clean Power Plan, which would regulate carbon dioxide from coal plants. Each state is supposed to draft its own

plan. Some governors say they won't, but that would only result in the Environmental Protection Agency's writing a state plan for them.

Meanwhile, congressional Republicans threatening to attach budget riders that would kill the federal air-quality plan are setting the table for a showdown that threatens another government shutdown.

Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt has been especially insistent. His lawsuits to block the federal plan have failed, but he is seeking yet another hearing to make the specious argument that 15 years isn't enough time to cut carbon dioxide emissions to 30 percent of 2005 levels.

Pruitt's histrionics ignore the consequences of failing to act. The new EPA rules could save up to \$93 billion in health-care costs by 2030 while preventing 6,600 premature deaths and 150,000 asthma attacks in children.

Carbon pollution contributes to global warming, which can no longer be dismissed as a fantasy, even by elected officials who appear to be owned by the fossil-fuel industry. Global warming's impact can be seen in melting glaciers, rising sea levels, droughts, wildfires, and floods, which have taken lives and cost taxpayers billions to repair damages.

The first five months of 2015 were the hottest on record. The 10 hottest years on record have occurred since 1998. Without preventive action now, we can expect more heat waves with devastating effects on people and wildlife. Ocean water will become more acidic and less hospitable for corals and crustaceans. On land, expect more invasive plants and insects that devastate forests.

Opponents of the new emissions plan are calling attention to the jobs in coal and supporting industries that will be lost once the EPA rules go into effect. But a recent Economic Policy Institute analysis indicates that there would be a net gain in employment due to jobs created in the clean-energy and conservation sectors.

In other words, instead of fighting the emissions plan, the governors who oppose it should be putting down their bullhorns and picking up their phones to talk new energy companies into coming to their states to help absorb expected job losses. Workers facing unemployment can be retrained for clean-energy jobs, especially in technical fields that could grow significantly.

There's no need for this country to act like some dinosaur waiting for climate change to make it extinct. The Clean Power Plan will help accelerate the development of clean, safe, and profitable energy sources that wean us off toxic fuels.

— The Philadelphia Inquirer

Downturn in global oil and gas market impacts western Pa.

07/30/2015

Allegheny Times, The

The signs are everywhere.

Consol Energy recently announced it won't drill any new gas wells for the next year and a half amidst a net loss of more than \$600 million in the second quarter. Range Resources has announced it plans to reduce its workforce by 11 percent.

The cuts seem to be spreading industrywide. Energy company Chevron plans to slash more than 1,500 jobs, while Halliburton recently announced it was shutting down an office in Indiana County amidst a push to eliminate 6,000 jobs companywide.

A recent report in the Wall Street Journal didn't paint a better picture; the publication said more than 50,000 energy jobs have been lost in the past three months. Western Pennsylvania has, for several years, been at the heart of the Marcellus shale boom, and the downturn in the market is being felt here, too.

Jack Manning, chairman of the economic development taskforce for the Beaver County Chamber of Commerce, said the downturn is related to plunging oil prices and supply not meeting demand.

"This is an outcome of low crude prices globally, and that's really created a glut," Manning said. "It comes down to supply and demand. There is a lot of supply of shale gas globally and domestically, so now companies are cutting back on production."

The downturn comes at an unfortunate time locally, Manning said, because places like the Community College of Beaver County are still churning out new workers in the oil and gas industry for jobs that might not exist anymore.

"I've heard locally there's a lot of concern over the hiring slowing down," he said.

"And what concerns me is there are a lot of people still trying to get into that field and starting to do training and workforce development. This isn't coming at a good time, especially because we continue training qualified workers for those jobs." The only positive aspect is that Manning, who spent most of his career in the chemicals business, is convinced the downturn is only temporary.

"I've always found the energy field, and particularly shale oil and gas, is very cyclical," he said. "At some point, this is going to change, prices will go back up and there will be a ramping up of drilling sites coming back."

David Spigelmeyer, president of the Marcellus Shale Coalition, said the record-low oil prices are half of what they were a year ago, which creates a "squeeze in investment to the tune of more than \$10 billion in retreating capital" for 2015.

"And as a result, we're seeing lesser rig counts and job reductions," he said.

"All of that is real and happening today."

The oversupply of oil and gas also plays a role in the downturn, being that the industry in Pennsylvania has quickly gone from producing a quarter of Pennsylvania's supply to 20 percent of America's supply in a span of six years.

"Did everybody see the depth of where we are today?" he said. "Probably not. But I think it's fair to say no one saw the volumes rising that quickly, either." Spigelmeyer also railed against a proposed severance tax put forth by Gov. Tom Wolf, a tax that Spigelmeyer said will only make a bad situation worse.

"The severance tax is a false choice," he said. "People in Pennsylvania are realizing they've been sold a bill of goods here."

Erica Loftus, president of the chamber of commerce, said the industry decline is being felt here at home.

"It's definitely affecting members of ours," she said.

"It's bittersweet because gas prices are low for consumers, but for companies like Range Resources, investing in the community and economic development is very limited right now."

Loftus added that the downturn has many other ancillary affects locally because companies are "so limited on what they can spend. That means everything from employees to donations to how they get involved in the community."

Despite the downturn, Manning and Spigelmeyer are not convinced the current business climate is the new normal.

For Manning, it's only a matter of time.

"This will definitely change," he said.

"History tells us this will definitely change. It's just that some cycles last longer than others."

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Regarding climate change, GOP hopefuls are hopeless - or hapless

08/06/2015

Virginian-Pilot, The

THE VAST MAJORITY of scientists who have devoted their professional lives to studying the Earth's climate believe human-induced warming is an urgent problem requiring bold action. Republican candidates for president insist they know better.

With one possible exception - Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who barely registers in the polls - GOP contenders either doubt the scientific consensus on climate change or oppose attempts to do anything about it. This promises to be one of the starker ideological divides facing voters next year.

No pressure; it's only the fate of the planet hanging in the balance.

Before President Barack Obama could even announce his administration's tough new curbs on carbon emissions from power plants, Republican hopefuls launched pre-emptive attacks. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, who flat-out denies climate change is taking place, accused scientists of "cooking the books" and Democrats of choosing "California environmentalist billionaires and their campaign donations" over "the jobs of union members."

Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida charged the new rules "will make the cost of electricity high for millions of Americans." Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush called the regulations "unconstitutional" and claimed they would cost jobs.

These comments came at Sunday's Freedom Partners forum, organized by conservative billionaires Charles and David Koch to give GOP candidates a chance to strut their stuff. In that setting, I suppose, reality-based rhetoric would be too much to hope for.

For the record, let's take a moment to deal with the above-quoted blather, which is typical of the lines of "argument" from the multitudinous GOP field.

To claim there is no atmospheric warming, Cruz cherry-picks one set of satellite measurement data - paying no attention to other data sets, which show continued warming - and chooses 1998 as a starting point. But that year was an obvious outlier; temperatures took a huge and anomalous leap, likely because of an unusually strong El Nino phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean.

Any graph of yearly global temperatures forms a saw-tooth pattern, but the overall trend is unambiguously upward. Cruz and other climate-change deniers ignore the fact that nine of the 10 hottest years on record have occurred since the turn of the century - the one exception being 1998. The deniers also pretend to be unaware that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by a stunning 40 percent since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, when humans began burning fossil fuels in large quantities. Unless Cruz has rewritten the fundamental rules of

physics, such an increase has to cause warming.

Rubio claims the new carbon rules will be too expensive for consumers, but he seems not to know that utility companies already are moving away from coal, which releases more carbon dioxide than other fuels such as natural gas. The Obama administration has estimated that electricity prices might rise 4.9 percent by 2020 - a small price to pay given the stakes.

As for Bush's claim that the regulations are unconstitutional, the Supreme Court ruled last year that the Environmental Protection Agency has the authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate carbon emissions by power plants, factories and other polluting facilities. The 7-2 decision was written by Justice Antonin Scalia. Enough said.

The rest of the GOP field ranges from hopeless to hapless on the issue. Front-runner Donald Trump - I can't believe I wrote those words, but that's what he is - firmly belongs in the former camp. He has called global warming a "hoax" and once said the whole idea "was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing noncompetitive." Trump also has cited cold winter weather in the United States as "evidence."

These Republicans seem to forget that the Earth is really, really big - so big that it can be cold in one place, such as Manhattan, and hot in other places. At the same time.

Of the other candidates, Ohio Gov. John Kasich, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, former New York Gov. George Pataki and businesswoman Carly Fiorina have at times acknowledged the scientific consensus on climate change but hemmed and hawed about what, if any, action to take. Rick Santorum joins Trump and Cruz in full denial. The rest - Scott Walker, Mike Huckabee, Rick Perry, Rand Paul, Bobby Jindal, Ben Carson and Jim Gilmore - either aren't sure warming is taking place or don't know if humans are causing it.

Democrats Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders both promise even tougher action against climate change than Obama has taken. This is a very big reason why elections matter.

Eugene Robinson is a Washington Post columnist. Email: eugenerobinson@washpost.com Where's Kerry? Kerry Dougherty's column will return soon.

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Clean Power Plan is a much-needed step in the U.S. - opinion

08/08/2015

Herald-Dispatch

News of President Obama's Clean Power Plan was a great way to start last week for those of us concerned about global climate issues for the U.S. and the world.

As an environmental scientist and plant ecologist, I understand the problems humans have created in increasing atmospheric CO₂ concentrations to more than 400 ppm, well beyond anything on record for the past million years or so, when concentrations varied between 180 and 280 ppm. These increases are almost entirely from human activities, particularly energy production. Global fossil-fuel carbon emissions in 1906 were 707 million metric tons; in 2006 they were 8.2 billion metric tons.

I am also aware of the diminishing, yet vocal, segment of the U.S. that denies the inevitable heat-trapping nature of CO₂ and other gasses, such as methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and water vapor (H₂O), which are far more effective at trapping heat than CO₂ and with CH₄ and N₂O increasing at least as rapidly as CO₂.

I am certain that the deniers, very few of whom are scientists, are already preparing their FOX News-derived retorts to this column. Before they do, however, I have one challenge for them. First, a quick science lesson.

These gasses have one thing in common: they comprise 3-5 atoms connected by single bonds, which makes them "wobbly." Their wobble causes them to absorb infrared radiation (i.e., "heat"). For simplicity, let's stick with CO₂. When it's in the atmosphere, it can do little else but trap heat; if there were no CO₂, there would be no liquid H₂O on earth's surface - all ice. So, here's the challenge: describe a valid scenario of an atmosphere with ever-increasing CO₂ that does NOT trap more heat.

While you are doing that, I have some good news. All evidence indicates that environmental legislation to fight human-caused climate change will succeed. If only there were success stories to use as models Wait - I can think of two; not only **WERE** they successful; they still are!

No. 1: The Clean Air Act. Signed into law in 1970 by Richard Nixon, this initially regulated sulfur emissions (largely from coal-fired power plants) that created acid deposition. Back then, there was resistance from conservative politicians, claiming it would "wreck the economy," the same tired mantra from the deniers. What we got was

lower acidity, but no wrecked economy.

No. 2: The Montreal Protocol. Signed in 1988 by Ronald Reagan, this was sweeping international legislation banning global production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that were destroying our protective ozone layer. Same resistance, same mantra of wrecked economy. Result? Virtually total elimination of CFC production, no wrecked economy, and now a substantially improved ozone layer that has been documented to continue to save human lives.

Human alteration of climate change - very real, very serious. We have the means to fix it; now we need the will. For more information on a positive solution, go to www.CitizensClimateLobby.org.

I am pleased to share this on behalf of a newly-formed group here in Huntington-Citizens' Climate Lobby-Huntington. Anyone interested in joining us should contact Kate McComas (wv.huntington@citizensclimatelobby.org).

Dr. Frank S. Gilliam is a professor of biological sciences at Marshall University.

State Chamber of Commerce lays out its plan for jobs

08/08/2015

Herald-Dispatch, The

The pathway to finding a job and the buying power and security brought by steady employment is becoming less and less real for too many West Virginians. Federal data reveals our state has the nation's highest unemployment rate, second fastest population decline, lowest level of participation in the workforce by working age adults and less job creation than all other states.

This troubling state of affairs is documented in reports compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census. Our state had about a 10-year stretch of reasonably good news during which per capita income and net jobs increased, providing tax revenue to counties and the state. This period of growth allowed communities and government to pay down long-term debt, build new schools and offer employment to our fellow citizens. Energy production, chiefly coal mining, led the way in improving our economy through much of this period.

Many West Virginians are surprised to learn our state's highest wages are paid in counties that produce the most coal. During the 10-year coal boom, the highest average annual earnings to workers came from Boone County, then our largest coal producer. As U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules take effect, the picture for many West Virginia working families darkens.

Several factors, including the discovery of reasonably priced and abundant natural gas, must be considered in looking at world energy supplies and market costs. However, it

is important to know coal and all West Virginia-produced fossil fuels are under unprecedented attack from the Obama administration. The Democratic Party platform calls for electricity production that would require 50 percent less coal use in the foreseeable future. Meantime the desire to improve the standard of living in India and China by using coal to create electricity is enormous. China is opening a new coal-powered generating plant each week.

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, whose members employ over half of our state's workers, is not throwing in the towel, but is adding its voice with legislative and state leaders who know we can and should do better.

Most job creation in any state comes from existing business. As West Virginia's largest business advocacy, member-supported network, the Chamber has unique abilities to hear from employers who love West Virginia and want the opportunity to grow and prosper where they are planted.

The Chamber has developed a jobs plan for West Virginia's future and invites readers' thoughts and comments.

n Manufacturing: First, let's reverse the job losses. Our manufacturing members tell us West Virginia's tax structure impedes job creation. The number one problem identified is our tax on equipment and inventory. Manufacturers also tell us that replacing an aging workforce with competent, well trained and drug-free new workers is a must for the 21st Century workforce.

n Energy exploration and production: The world needs our fuel. Nearly 70 percent of U.S. electricity is produced by natural gas and coal. Technology, research and infrastructure are needed to keep these West Virginia resources viable.

n Banking and insurance: Some small states have attracted jobs from banks and insurance companies. These companies are "back office" intensive. Our low commercial occupancy costs and competitive wages could make us a real center of banking, insurance and credit company back-office jobs.

n Department of Defense contracting: West Virginia is 50th in the nation in sales to the U.S. Department of Defense. The Pentagon is the largest purchaser of goods and technical services on Planet Earth. Let's develop a vehicle for supplying these needs.

n Tourism and state image: Our image suffers in the national media. It will take a real campaign with more money to change regional and national perceptions. We have a wonderful story to tell. Let's recommit ourselves to a bigger, better message.

n Small Business and entrepreneurs: Long identified as each state's engine of job creation, small business needs well prepared, drug-free workers, high speed Internet, and freedom from overly burdensome paperwork and compliance filings.

n Health Care and education: With so many people living in close proximity to our state, continuing to attract patients to world class health facilities is a must. Health providers demand good schools and a culture of innovation in our communities.

n Universities and research: Our universities attract talent. Harnessing the innovation and horsepower of faculty and students is a must. Surrounding states have created research parks and innovation zones that keep our universities and their students at home.

The new leaders of the West Virginia legislature enacted long-needed economic reforms in the 2015 legislative session. These bold leaders are promising to do more to help West Virginia's economy in 2016. Innovation in education, assistance for small business, regulatory reform and legal fairness were meaningfully addressed by the new legislature. These improvements will help West Virginia diversify its economy and compete with other states for jobs. West Virginia is too good, offers too much and has too much going for it to sit back and play the role of victim. Now is our time to advance our future with good policy backed by vision and leadership.

Steve Roberts is president of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce. The organization's website is www.wvchamber.com/

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